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ABSTRACT

To address the issues of student recruitment and retention in Florida, a three-year research study was conducted. The three phases of the study sought the following: (1) to describe barriers to recruitment and retention of disadvantaged, unemployed, underemployed, out-of-school youth as perceived by students, teachers, counselors, and administrators; (2) to develop a means for implementing proven recruitment strategies to attract and retain students in postsecondary vocational programs; and (3) to identify factors that influenced students who were currently enrolled in a postsecondary vocational program to enroll and also the factors that influenced them to continue enrollment. Data were gathered through interviews and by mail surveys of students, teachers, counselors, and administrators. Results of data analysis showed that administrators, teachers, and counselors relied too often on recruitment strategies that were less successful, such as booths at fairs, and that students and professional personnel perceived different strategies as most effective. For example, school officials thought that "personal contact with students enrolled in the program or program graduates" was the most effective strategy, while students rated it fairly low. The study produced a recruitment manual that school personnel could use to enhance their chances of successful recruitment and retention of disadvantaged students. (KC)

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FINAL REPORT

Project Number 5-2C31

From September 1, 1984 to December 31, 1984

A Compendium of Research Addressing Barriers to Student Recruitment and Retention in Vocational Education in Florida

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A COMPENDIUM OF RESEARCH ADDRESSING BARRIERS TO STUDENT RECRUITMENT AND RETENTION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN FLORIDA

INTRODUCTION

Acquiring and maintaining employment after completing high school is the goal of most students. The number of students leaving the educational system before acquiring the skills necessary to achieve this goal has been a concern of vocational educators for many years. Often times the group most vulnerable to drop out pressures are the disadvantaged students. Recognizing this group as needing the most help, many Florida school districts have initiated practices to recruit disadvantaged, unemployed, underemployed and out-of-school youth into vocational training programs and to place them in jobs. The degrees of success of these efforts have been variable. Even in the programs where noticeable success was achieved, educators reported that a number of barriers stand in the path of progress in meeting the basic educational needs of this special group of students. Often times these are perceived barriers that may or may not be real. Various practices and procedures which can prevent students from enrolling or re-enrolling and successfully obtaining adequate skills exist in the minds of students, teachers, counselors, and administrators; therefore, the research reported herein distinguishes between real barriers and trivial perceptions. The research also identifies strategies to overcome many of the real barriers to student enrollment and retention in vocational education programs.

PURPOSES

To address the issues of student recruitment and retention in Florida, a three-year research study has been conducted. The study was conducted in three phases, each concentrating on a specific purpose. These purposes were:

1. To describe barriers to recruitment and retention of disadvantaged, unemployed, underemployed, and out-of-school youth as perceived by students, teachers, counselors, and administrators.

2. To develop a means for implementing proven recruitment strategies to attract and retain students in post-secondary vocational programs.

3. To identify factors that influenced students who were currently enrolled in a postsecondary vocational program to enroll and also the factors that influenced them to continue enrollment.

OBJECTIVES

In order to achieve the purposes, specific objectives were developed as guidelines for conducting each phase of the study. A statement of each objective, the methodology used, the findings, the conclusions, and the recommendations are presented in this summary.

Phase I

Objective one of phase I, to identify and describe recruitment practices that have been used successfully to attract disadvantaged, unemployed, underemployed, and out-of-school youth, was accomplished by identifying ten postsecondary area vocational schools in Florida with exemplary recruitment programs. The schools with exemplary recruitment programs were identified by requesting the regional vocational consultants to list two postsecondary schools in their region who had been exemplary in their recruitment efforts. While the schools were being identified, a survey instrument was developed to aid the researchers in collecting relative data. The instrument developed was a thirty-five item questionnaire that was divided into six major topical areas. The instrument used a modified Likert scale to determine the degree of utilization and the degree of success for each recruitment practice listed. Content validity for the instrument was established through on-site interviews with three area vocational school directors who were asked to review the instrument and make appropriate additions or deletions to the list. Directors who helped to establish content validity for the instrument were not included in the study.

The data were collected using the interview questionnaire to standardize the format of the personal on-site interview; however, each school representative was encouraged to discuss other innovative recruitment practices currently being used.

The data pertaining to this objective were analyzed by determining the mean response for each recruitment practice listed. The mean responses were then ranked from high to low to indicate those used most frequently and most successfully.

The highest ranked recruitment practice for success by area vocational school directors was "encouraging high school students to take courses while completing graduation requirements at their high school." All of the directors surveyed indicated that they had experienced "very much success" with this recruitment practice.

"Advertising programs in local newspapers" was the second highest ranked recruitment practice followed by "personal contacts with prospective students made by past and present students" and "mass mailings of the school class schedule to prospective students." Also included in the ten most successful practices were:

1. Utilization of special displays emphasizing the success of students who completed vocational programs.

2. Recruitment through community organizations dealing with special target groups.

3. Advertisements or flyers sent to parents.

4. Development of slide-tape presentations for distribution throughout the region.

5. Participation in recruitment programs conducted by high schools.

6. Providing tours of vocational programs for prospective students.

In addition to inquiring about the degree of success for each identified recruitment practice, each director was asked to rate the degree to which his/her school was utilizing each recruitment practice.

According to the directors surveyed, the most utilized recruitment practice was the "utilization of display booths at fairs, exhibitions, malls, etc." It is interesting to note that the most utilized recruitment practice is not among the ten most successful recruitment practices. "Utilization of display booths at fairs, exhibitions, malls, etc." ranked thirteen on the success list.

"Personal contacts with prospective students made by past and present students" and the "development of slide presentations for distribution throughout the region" tied as the second most utilized recruitment practice. Also included in the ten recruitment practices that are utilized the most were:

1. Visits to feeder schools made by vocational school staff and students

2. Recruit through community organizations dealing with special target groups

3. Instructors and counselors speaking to groups, schools, or organizations representing special target groups

4. Participation in recruitment programs conducted by high schools

5. Providing tours of vocational programs for prospective students

6. Advertising in local newspapers

7. Use of open houses

Based upon the findings of objective one and an analysis of the results of the interviews, the following conclusions were developed:

1. The recruitment practice perceived to be the most successful by area vocational school directors was "encouraging high school students to take course while completing graduation requirements at their high school."

2. "Advertising programs in local newspapers" and "personal contacts with prospective students" were perceived by area vocational school directors as being the second and third most successful recruitment practices.

3. The recruitment practice utilized most frequently by area vocational school directors was the "construction of display booths at fairs, exhibitions, malls, etc."

4. "Personal contact with prospective students" and "the development of slide presentations for distribution throughout the region" ranked second and third in the degree of utilization.

5. "Personal contact with prospective students made by past and present students" received the overall highest ranking in terms of frequency of use and perceived success.

6. Other recruitment practices that ranked high in both utilization and success were: "development of a slide tape presentation for distribution throughout the region," "recruitment through community organizations dealing with special target groups," "advertising programs in local newspapers," and "encouraging high school students to take courses while completing graduation requirements at their high school."

Objective two of phase I, to identify students who re-enrolled in vocational education programs and compare their perception of program barriers with those students who had exited prior to program completion, was accomplished by a telephone survey instrument. Based on the review of literature, a comprehensive list of program barriers was compiled. Each variable on the list was classified as a situational barrier, i.e. those barriers which relate to how adults perceive themselves as learners, institutional barrier, i.e. institutional practices or procedures that discourage working adults from participating in educational activities, or dispositional barrier, i.e. barriers which include such things as lack of child care, lack of money, and transportation problems; thus allowing the researchers to develop subcategories of variables within the instrument. Each

school participating in the study was asked to supply a list of twenty students who could be contacted by telephone. School officials were asked to randomly select from their files ten students who had dropped out of the area vocational school, and ten students who had dropped out and returned at a later date. Each school compiled a list, thus enabling the researchers to develop a list of approximately two hundred names to be used in the telephone interview. Using the survey instrument described, the researchers trained a group of six interviewers to conduct the telphone surveys. One hundred and sixty-six telephone contacts were made.

The data for objective two were analyzed by using summary statistics to determine the frequency of response to each question asked on the telephone survey instrument. Individual questions were grouped under the titles of institutional, dispositional, or situational barriers, and each of the questions within the groups were ranked from high to low, based on frequency of response.

In addition, mean scores for both dropouts and returnees were calculated for each major group (institutional, dispositional, situational) of questions to which they responded. The data were subjected to the t-test to determine if significant differences existed between the way dropouts and returnees responded to the questions.

The barrier perceived by the students responding as having the greatest impact on their decisions to "drop out" of school was "I postponed my plans temporarily." Other barriers among the ten having the greatest impact on the students' decisions to "drop out" of school were:

1. Needed financial aid
2. Needed at home
3. Could not fit part-time job around school
4. Transportation was a problem
5. Health problems
6. Needed more guidance
7. Decided to attend another school
8. Could not attend class regularly
9. Believed courses were not of suitable quality

Of the top ten barriers, two were institutional, six were situational, and two were dispositional.

The two factors that influenced students to return to school were; "personal contacts by a school faculty member or a current or former student" and "awareness of school courses and schedules because of extensive use of both print and electronics media."

Based upon the findings of objective two and an analysis of the results of the interviews, the following conclusions were developed:

1. It appears that students leave the area vocational school programs because they are not receiving adequate guidance or they are in financial distress.

2. It appears that an increase in career guidance and counseling, as well as increased availability of financial aid would help to keep more students in vocational programs.

3. While the results of the t-test suggest a significant difference in the way returnees and dropouts answer the questions related to institutional variables, it should be noted that the means generated by this group of variables were calculated on the total number of positive responses for these questions, and did not include respondents who indicated that several of those questions were not applicable. Therefore, it appears that the students who left the programs, left because of some perceived degree of dissatisfaction with the institution, rather than some personal inadequacies on their part.

4. Of the students who returned to school, 57 percent were recruited back to school through one or more of the recruitment activities identified in objective one. This suggested that approximately 43 percent of those who returned to school did so on their own volition with little or no prompting from the recruitment activities identified by this study. The data also suggested that the most successful recruitment activities were "personal contacts by a school faculty member or a former or present student." "Use of the media, both electronic and printed," was also identified by returnees as a successful recruitment practice.

Objective three of phase I, to describe perceived barriers related to student recruitment and student retention identified by teachers, counselors, and administrators of vocational training programs was accomplished by a mail survey. The researchers developed a 50 item questionnaire using barriers identified through related literature. Responses were gathered on a modified Likert scale, with one open ended question which allowed respondents to identify other significant program barriers. Content validity for the instrument was established by pilot testing the instrument in a nearby area vocational school which

was not a part of the sample for the study. The final instrument was revised and refined based on the results of the pilot testing. A reliability test on the instrument yielded a reliability coefficient of .92.

Each school participating in the study was asked to supply a complete list of all faculty and administrators currently involved in vocational programming. This request yielded a total list of 717 names. From this list a stratified random sample of 260 faculty and administrators was drawn. The sample was stratified on the basis of the percent of the total population that each school staff represented. The initial mailing to all two hundred and sixty faculty members was followed-up closely with a second mailing to all non-respondents. Of the two hundred and sixty faculty members originally surveyed two hundred and twenty responses (84.6 percent) were elicited with the two mailings. No attempt was made to follow up the 40 non-respondents.

Individual questions on the questionnaire were grouped under the titles of institutional, dispositional, or situational barriers. Mean scores for each group of barriers by respondent category (administrators, teachers, counselors) were calculated. To determine if any significant differences existed in the way each of the three faculty groups responded to each of the three barrier groups, the data were subjected to a one-way ANOVA. Those means found to be significantly different were followed-up with the Duncan's Multiple Range Test.

The findings of objective three indicate that program barriers perceived by the total group of respondents as having the greatest impact on program completion were; "the financial need of the student," "the ability and willingness of the student to attend class regularly," and "a lack of self motivation on the part of the student."

Other program barriers perceived by the total group of respondents as impacting on program completion were; "the inability of students to accept responsibilities associated with the program," "the student's attitudes that government support is better than working," "uncertainty about their future," and "acceptance of a job related to their vocational training."

Conversely, those barriers perceived by the total group of respondents as having the least impact on program completion were; "students perceptions of an unsafe school environment," "unavailability of remedial instruction," "racial prejudice," "admission procedures which were too difficult," and "age differences among the students."

Administrators, teachers, and counselors did not respond significantly different to questions grouped as institutional and dispositional barriers. However, significant differences existed among the means of administrators, teachers, and counselors when they responded to the questions grouped as situational barriers.

Based upon the findings of objective three and on an analysis of the results of the surveys, the following conclusions were developed.

1. It appears that there is no difference in the way administrators, teachers, and counselors responded to questions grouped as institutional or dispositional barriers. However, when responding to the group of questions grouped as situational barriers, significant difference existed among the mean scores of all three groups.

2. Administrators perceived the impact of situational barriers to be the greatest, while counselors perceived them to be the least. It is interesting to note that there was little difference between the major barriers perceived by faculty groups in objective three and the major barriers perceived by the students themselves in objective two. One major difference to be noted; however, is that faculty groups as a whole felt that students often times failed to complete programs because of lack of responsible behavior, poor motivation, and poor attitude. Students did not perceive their behavior as irresponsible, but rather as situations over which they had no control.

Phase II

Objective one of phase II, to identify methods to overcome the most significant barriers to student retention as identified by students, teachers, counselors, and administrators was accomplished by utilizing two samples from a population of 1433 postsecondary vocational institutions throughout the nation. The first sample was selected based upon the recommendations of twelve state and national leaders in vocational education. The national leaders were asked to identify five states that were the leaders in postsecondary vocational education. Sixteen states were identified by at least one national leader. The six states that were named most frequently were selected for the study sample. The state directors for vocational education in each of the six states selected were contacted and asked to identify six programs within their state that had exemplary postsecondary vocational programs. The state directors provided the program location, local director's name, and telephone number. As a result of these recommendations, a sample of twenty-four of the thirty-six local administrators was interviewed by telephone.

Two instruments were developed to accomplish objective one of phase II. Development of the first instrument began with a list of 49 barriers to entering and remaining in postsecondary vocational education programs which had been identified in phase I. The list was condensed to thirteen based on the ranking of each

barrier's importance by students, administrators, counselors, and teachers. The top ten barriers as ranked by the students were used, and also any that were ranked ten or higher by the administrators, counselors, or teachers. Several barriers that were closely related were combined into one. The thirteen barriers ascertained by this process were included in the instrument. The instrument which was developed from the identified barriers was a thirteen question, open-ended telephone interview survey which sought to ascertain strategies to overcome identified barriers to student retention. The time required to discuss thirteen questions was too long to keep an administrator on the telephone; therefore, after each of the thirteen questions was analyzed, the instrument was divided into three parts. Part A of the instrument contained four questions related to the student's attitude toward the school, Part B contained four questions related to the student's personal situation, and Part C contained five questions related to the student's attitude toward their personal needs as a learner. Since the questions were divided into three approximately uniform groups, it was possible for the researchers to randomly assign one group of questions to each member of the sample and conduct ten to fifteen minute interviews.

Content validity of the instrument was established by field testing the instrument using nine Florida area vocational school directors. Interviews were conducted using one of the three parts of the instrument with each director. The directors were asked to respond to the instrument, make suggestions for additions or deletions to the questions and comment on the overall clarity of the instrument. No revisions were recommended, therefore, the instrument was used as developed. The instrument was used to interview 24 vocational school directors in six states to ascertain strategies to overcome barriers to student retention. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed. Eighty-five strategies were ascertained from the interviews. The 85 strategies identified were then used to develop the second instrument.

The second instrument listed the 85 strategies identified by the first survey. The strategies were categorized by barrier and the respondents' perceptions were solicited using a forced response, four-point modified Likert scale. The respondents indicated their perception of the degree of utilization of each strategy by circling; (1) no utilization, (2) very little utilization, (3) some utilization, or (4) very much utilization. The same scale was used to rate the degree of success of each strategy.

Content validity of the instrument was established through on-site interviews with seven vocational directors in Florida and Georgia who were asked to respond to the instrument, make appropriate additions or deletions to the lists, and comment on the overall clarity of the instrument. No revisions were recommended; therefore, the instrument was used as developed.

Directors who were involved in establishing content validity of the instrument were not included in the study sample. The instrument was mailed to a national sample of vocational school administrators.

The information for development of the instruments and data for the study were collected using a telephone interview survey and a mail survey of vocational administrators.

The telephone interview survey was conducted by the researchers. The interviews were tape recorded and transcribed by a graduate research assistant. A 100 percent response rate was achieved using the telephone survey.

The vocational administrator survey was mailed to 312 vocational administrators throughout the nation. A cover letter and a return envelope were included with each instrument. Two weeks after the initial mailing, a follow-up letter, a copy of the instrument, and a return envelope were mailed to those who had not responded. In an effort to increase the response rate, a second follow-up letter, another copy of the instrument, and a stamped return envelope were mailed to the non-respondents. The surveys were coded so that follow-up letters were sent only to those not responding.

On the pre-determined cut-off date, 201 surveys had been returned. Of these, 146 were usable in the study. This was a 64.4 percent overall return rate and a 46.8 percent usable return rate.

The reason for the unusually large number of non-usable instruments was that many of the schools did not offer postsecondary programs. The researchers contacted several potential sources for a complete list of postsecondary institutions. After an exhaustive search and based upon the recommendations of others in vocational education, a mailing list was selected and purchased from Praken Publications, Ann Arbor, Michigan. Based on the responses, it seemed that the term postsecondary was not accurately defined and the list contained approximately 25 percent secondary schools. Most of the comments on the non-usable surveys related to the fact that the school did not offer a postsecondary program and the administrator did not feel qualified to respond to an instrument that related to postsecondary students.

Data pertaining to this objective were analyzed by determining the mean response for each strategy categorized by barrier. The mean responses were then rank ordered to indicate those used most frequently and most successfully. Correlation coefficients between responses for utilization and responses for success were determined for each strategy.

The data indicated that "financial aid counseling" is the highest ranked strategy by utilization for overcoming the student's need for financial aid. The administrators did not consider this the most successful strategy, since they rated "assisting students with applying for Federal (BEOG) grants as the most successful." "Utilizing veteran benefits" was considered the second most successful strategy while "implementing a work study program" was ranked third. "The use of CETA" was ranked as the second most utilized strategy and "assisting students with applying for Federal (BEOG) grants" was ranked third. The data also show that "securing industry sponsorships" and "providing scholarships" were the least utilized strategies. The perceptions of the degree of success of these strategies by those using them were also ranked low.

The strategy ranked first as being the most utilized for overcoming the barrier defined as "students cannot fit school around part-time jobs" is to "allow students to enroll part-time." This strategy was also ranked first as to its degree of success. "Providing flexible schedules" and "offering courses at alternative times" were ranked second and third respectively for degree of utilization. As far as the degree of success for these two strategies, they were ranked third and second respectively. "Utilizing funds available to employ students within the school system" and "assisting students in finding part-time jobs compatible with the school schedule" were the least used strategies and also perceived as being the least successful.

"Providing a school sponsored transportation system" was ranked first in utilization and success as being the strategy for overcoming the barrier of "inadequate transportation for students." "Organizing car pools" and "encouraging students to use the public bus system" were ranked second and third respectively as to their degree of utilization, but were reversed in rank for perceived degree of success. "Encouraging the use of a private industry sponsored transportation system" was the lowest ranked strategy by utilization and success.

Respondents to the survey address the issue of "students need more guidance" by "administering tests to identify interests and abilities," "providing student services personnel" and "publicizing the availability of counseling services." The data indicated that these three strategies were ranked as the three most utilized and most successful. Also, it was found that most administrators did not hire additional vocational counselors to help with this problem. Of those who did, it was the least successful practice used.

Most administrators agree that the most successful way to get students to attend class regularly is to "get them into hands-on work quickly." This strategy was ranked first in utilization and success. The second most utilized strategy was to "establish rigid attendance requirements," however, administrators felt that the "use of competency based instruction" had been more successful. "Make-up sessions" and "reprimands" were the least used and are the least successful strategies.

"Active involvement of an advisory committee," "consultation with industry personnel," and "assessment of job placement and employer satisfaction" were the most utilized and the most successful strategies for overcoming the barrier identified as "courses are not deemed to be of desirable quality for the students." Very few administrators used "merit based pay" for instructors to improve the quality of their programs. Those who did, indicated that merit based pay for instructors was the least successful practice used. Also, "consultations with state program specialists," "utilization of faculty evaluations by students," and "replacing the instructor" were used with very little success.

The respondents indicated that "emphasizing work ethics in class" was the most often used practice to encourage students to accept the responsibilities associated with the program. "Providing counseling and guidance for students" and "using competency based instruction" were the second and third most utilized strategies. The use of "competency based instruction," "emphasizing work ethics," and "providing counseling and guidance" were also the three most successful strategies. The respondents also indicated that they did not "suspend students from programs" very often. Of those who did, it was the least successful strategy used.

"Relating theory and application to the job" was the most often used and the most successful strategy to motivate students. "Making sure students get what they came to get" and "making the students feel they are part of the system" were the second and third ranked strategies by utilization and success. "Sponsoring student clubs" and "encouraging students to participate in competitive contests" were successful strategies. The least used and also the least successful practice, as indicated by those who also used it, was to "conduct special motivational seminars."

According to the respondents, "individualized instruction" was provided for those students whose secondary education was inadequate for them to succeed in a chosen vocational program. This strategy ranked first in degree of utilization and second in degree of success. "Remedial instruction" was perceived to be the most successful strategy and the second most utilized. "Ability grouping" was the least used strategy and also considered to be the least successful by those who used it.

When students accept jobs related to their vocational training prior to program completion, the respondents indicated that most administrators "apply the students' work experience toward program completion requirements." This strategy was ranked first in utilization and success. "Providing a supervised cooperative experience" was ranked third by utilization and second by success, while "maintaining an open entry/open exit policy" was ranked second by utilization and third by success. Most administrators do not discourage potential employers from employing students before completion of a program according to the respondents. Those who have discouraged this practice found it the least successful way to overcome the barrier.

The respondents indicated that "instructors are encouraged to work more closely with the students who are easily frustrated." This strategy was ranked as the most utilized and the most successful. The data also indicated that "providing counseling and advising," "building in early success for students," "referring students to counselors," and "providing developmental programs to help students meet their level of expectation" were perceived as being successful strategies. The least used and the least successfull strategy to help frustrated students was to "administer placement tests."

The respondents indicated that when "students temporarily postpone their plans to attend school," the most often used strategy is to "require the student to have an exit interview." However, the most successful strategy was to allow the student to finish on a part-time basis. "Requiring students to have an exit interview" was ranked second by perceived degree of success. The data also showed that "student follow-up to encourage them to re-enroll" was the least used and the least successful strategy.

"Private child care facilities" was ranked the most utilized strategy for assisting students with small children, however, it ranked second by perceived degree of success. "A child care facility operated by the school" was perceived as being the most successful strategy for overcoming the barrier defined as "there is a need for child care on the part of the student." "Co-op child care" was the least used, and perceived to be the least successful strategy for overcoming this concern.

Based upon the findings of objective one, phase II and an analysis of the results of the surveys, the following conclusions were developed:

1. There are forty-five retention strategies that have been used successfully as perceived by administrators who responded to the survey instrument. Each of these strategies had a mean score rating of 3.00 or greater. At least one strategy for each of the barriers was rated as being successful. Most barriers had two or more such strategies.

2. The correlation between the degree of utilization and the degree of success for each retention strategy was positive in all cases and significant at the .01 level for all except three of the strategies.

3. The correlation coefficients indicated that the retention strategies that are being used are also the ones that are successful. Also, that the strategies that are not being used are the ones which are not successful.

Objective two of phase II, to develop alternative strategies for student recruitment that address specific barriers identified by vocational school dropouts and re-enrollees, was accomplished by synthesizing data from phase I. The synthesis involved an evaluation and selection of innovative recruitment practices identified by vocational directors during personal interviews in phase I of the study. No statistical analysis was required to accomplish this objective.

Vocational directors indicated that the following innovative recruitment practices had been highly successful in their recruitment efforts.

1. Encourage the public to use the school facility as a meeting place.

2. Assist a panel of advisory committee members conduct an annual program for counselors and principals throughout the area.

3. Establish a vocational committee in the Chamber of Commerce.

4. Recruit through vocational student organizations.

5. Take a piece of equipment to a high school and demonstrate its use, i.e. taking a new typewriter and typing a letter to each student's parents.

6. Designate a staff person to be specifically responsible for recruitment.

7. Establish a minority recruiter.

8. Designate the last day of school before Christmas as family day and invite all family members to the campus.

9. Designate the last day in June as alumni day and invite alumni in to share success stories.

10. Obtain a monthly list of high school dropouts and write them to offer a three month scholarship to the school.

11. Offer scholarships to high school graduates and to all who pass the GED.

12. Send letters to businesses, community clubs, and program advisory committees giving them a scholarship to award to any student they select.

13. Utilize program based budgeting.

14. Establish a "SWAT" team to provide immediate response to business and industry training needs.

15. Establish a brochure rack in each area high school.

16. Establish recruitment as part of the written job responsibility of every staff member.

17. Watch for divorces and separations and call to offer job re-entry training.

18. House the professional library for teachers in the vocational school.

19. Offer a course for parents titled "How to Help Your Child Select a Career."

20. Utilize bumper stickers to promote various programs.

21. Encourage direct hiring of students through the school by area employers.

22. Utilize billboards on the highways in the area.

23. Encourage referral of job applicants by companies who believe an applicant is not qualified for a job.

Based upon the synthesis of the suggested recruitment practices, the following conclusion was developed. In isolated cases, innovative recruitment practices are used and are normally very effective.

Objective three of phase II, to develop a model for implementing alternative recruitment and retention strategies in vocational programs was accomplished by developing two models. The first model developed was the recruitment model, and the second one was the retention model.

The objective of the recruitment model was to present a systematic scheme for recruiting disadvantaged, handicapped, unemployed, underemployed, and other youth needing vocational training. The information used in the development of this model was assimilated via a review of related literature and ideas and opinions of students, instructors, counselors, and administrators.

Briefly, the steps for utilizing the recruitment model are:

1. Recognize the need for recruitment and identify the recruitment objectives.
2. Identify the target population.
3. Select the recruitment practices applicable to the target population.
4. Initiate the recruitment effort.
5. Evaluate the effectiveness of the recruitment effort.

The objective of the retention model was to present a systematic scheme for retaining students in postsecondary vocational training programs. Designed to be used as a guide for school personnel, the model identifies and defines specific barriers and offers alternative solutions for each. The strategies included in the model have been verified by administrators as to the degree of use and the degree of success that each has attained.

Briefly, the steps for utilizing the retention model are

1. Recognize and define the barrier.
2. Identify the strategies and consider the alternatives.
3. Implement the strategies selected by the administrator or the administrator's designee.
4. Evaluate the effectiveness of the strategy or strategies used.

Phase III

Objective one of phase III, to describe the factors that influenced students to enroll in postsecondary vocational education programs and to identify factors that contributed to their continued enrollment (i.e., the methods they are using to overcome the barriers to retention identified in the first two phases of this study) was accomplished by conducting a census of the 31 designated area vocational education schools. The purpose of the census was to ascertain the number of postsecondary students enrolled who had completed at least one semester of a vocational training program. The director of each school was asked to indicate whether or not they would cooperate in the study. Of the 31 school directors contacted, 22 (71 percent) indicated they would cooperate and that there were 14,254 students enrolled in postsecondary vocational programs who had completed at least one semester of training. The study was

limited to students who had completed at least one semester because the researchers were interested in identifying those factors that were contibuting to the students' continued enrollment.

Based upon a recommended sample selection table a sample of 389 students was selected from the accessible population. A precision level of plus or minus 5 percent was used. The sample was stratified based upon the number of students identified in each school. Each of the 22 directors of the area vocational schools received the proper number of surveys and was asked to randomly distribute them to instructors. The instructors randomly distributed the instruments to the study sample.

The purpose of the instrument used in phase III was to ascertain whether each strategy had influenced initial enrollment or continued enrollment. To accomplish this, the 85 strategies which had been identified in phase II were condensed to 20 statements. The condensation was based upon the success rate of the strategies as identified in phase II and by combining strategies which were closely related. Two open-ended questions were also included to allow the students to indicate other major reasons for enrolling or continuing enrollment.

Content validity of the instrument was established by requesting 27 students enrolled in postsecondary education programs to respond to and critique the instrument. Also, faculty members of the postsecondary schools and the Department of Agricultural and Extension Education, the University of Florida, reviewed the instrument. No major revisions were recommended. The Cronbach Alpha Coefficient was calculated for each column on the instrument. The Alpha coefficient was .82 for the initial influence column and .80 for the continued influence column.

The instrument utilized a four-point Likert scale to ascertain the student's perception of the degree of influence each of the strategies had upon their initial enrollment and their continued enrollment. The respondents indicated their perception of the degree of influence of each strategy by circling either: (1) no influence, (2) minor influence, (3) moderate influence, or (4) strong influence. A separate scale was used to allow the students to indicate the strategies' influence upon their initial enrollment and their continued enrollment.

The instrument with the cover letter was mailed to cooperating area vocational schools in Florida. The number of surveys sent to each director was proportional to the percentage of the total population the school represented. The directors randomly distributed the surveys among their instructors, who in turn randomly distributed the surveys among several of their students who had completed a semester or more of their program.

The instructors were asked to have the students respond to the instruments immediately and to collect the instruments as soon as the students had completed them.

Two weeks following the initial mailing, follow-up telephone calls were made to the directors who had not returned the survey instruments. One week following the first follow-up telephone call a second telephone call was made to the remaining non-responding directors. In response to the second telephone call, every director returned all or a portion of the survey instruments. Of the 389 survey instruments mailed, 318 were returned for an 82 percent return rate. All survey instruments returned were used in the analysis of the data.

The data pertaining to this objective were analyzed by determining the mean response for each of the 20 strategies on the questionnaire. The mean responses were rank-ordered to indicate the factors which had the highest degree of influence upon the students' initial enrollment and also upon their continued enrollment. A frequency distribution was calculated for each factor. Also, correlation coefficients between responses for initial influence and continued influence were determined.

The data indicated the reason most students enrolled in postsecondary training was that "they needed the training offered by the school to get the job they want." This reason was ranked first among those items listed in the survey with 74.3 percent of the respondents indicating that it was a strong influence and only 9.6 percent indicating it had no influence upon their initial enrollment. Other factors among the top five influencing students to enroll in postsecondary training were: "they felt they could provide a better standard of living for themselves and their family if they obtained vocational training," "the school had a reputation for quality programs," "the instructors kept students motivated by relating classroom theory to job performance," and "the course they enrolled in had a good record for placing students in the field they were trained." More than 40 percent of the respondents indicated each of the top five factors had a strong influence upon their decision to enroll in vocation training.

Conversely, the data shows there were nine factors which more than 40 percent of the respondents believe had no influence upon their decision to enroll in vocational training. These factors were: "child care was convenient and appropriate," "the school's night schedule allowed students to attend school and maintain a full-time job," " a part-time job was compatible with the school schedule," "guidance personnel helped identify interests and aptitudes and encouraged pursuit of vocational training," and "the school allowed students to test out of some areas of course work where previous experience had been obtained." Also included were, "a friend or former graduate of

the program recommended it," "the school was close to home," "financial aid was available," and "transportation was readily available and convenient."

The data also shows that students continue their enrollment in postsecondary vocational education because "they need the training offered by the school to acquire the job skills necessary for a specific career." More than 75 percent of the respondents indicated this to be a strong influence in their continued enrollment. Nearly 71 percent of the respondents felt they could "provide a better standard of living for themselves and their family if they obtained vocational training." This was the second most frequent factor identified, influencing students decisions to continue enrollment. More than 40 percent of the respondents also indicated that five other factors had a strong influence upon their decision to continue enrollment in their chosen vocational training program. These additional five factors were: "the instructors keep students motivated by relating classroom theory to job performance," "the school had a reputation for quality programs," "the course in which they enrolled had a good record for placing students in the field they were trained," and "the school had a good reputation for helping its graduates find employment."

Conversely, 88.7 percent of the respondents indicated that "child care being convenient and appropriate for their needs" had no influence on their continued enrollment in postsecondary vocational education. Also, 82 percent of the respondents indicated "the school's night schedule" had no influence on their continued enrollment. Other factors which more than 40 percent of the respondents indicated had no influence on their continued enrollment were: "a part-time job was compatible with the school schedule," " a friend or former graduate of the program had recommended it," "guidance personnel helped identify interest and aptitudes and encouraged pursuit of vocational training," "financial aid was available," "the school was close to their home," "the school allowed them to test out of some areas of course work where previous experience had been gained," and "transportation was readily available and convenient."

According to the frequency distribution, means, and rank order of the means, the same factors that were a strong influence upon the students' initial enrollment were also a strong influence upon their continued enrollment. The data also shows that the same is true for the factors that had no influence upon the students' continued enrollment.

The correlation coefficients between responses to the factors related to initial enrollment and continued enrollment are all positive and significant at the .05 alpha level. The correlation coefficients range from .94 for "child care was convenient and appropriate" to .64 for "the instructors keep students motivated by relating classroom theory to job performance." It should be noted that all the correlation

coefficients are consistently high, indicating the students feel that the factors influencing them to enroll initially also influence them to continue their enrollment. Conversely, it also indicates the students feel the factors that do not influence their initial enrollment also do not influence their continued enrollment. For example, "child care was convenient and appropriate" was ranked lowest on initial enrollment and also lowest on continued enrollment; therefore, the correlation coefficient was very high at .94.

In addition to evaluating the degree of influence each identified strategy had upon initial and continued enrollment, the students were asked to respond to open-ended statements requesting them to state other reasons for enrolling and continuing enrollment in a vocational training program. Of the students responding to the open-ended questions, almost all of them ranked their reasons as having a strong influence upon their decision to enroll or continue enrollment. There was no one common reason given for enrolling by a significant number of the respondents and most of the reasons were personal. Some of the more non-traditional reasons given for enrolling were: "retired and needed something constructive to do," "needed a challenge for therapy because of the loss of a spouse," "needed to do something for myself," "wanted to learn computers," "had been a homemaker for too long and wanted to change my way of life," "a son attended the school," "I was injured and needed to learn a new trade," "I wanted to go in business for myself," "I felt college degrees were not necessary for good jobs today," and "the training hours in the program agreed with child's school hours."

There was also a great variety of reasons given for continuing their enrollment as was indicated by the responses to why they continued their enrollment. Some of the reasons were: "I get paid to go," "I'm not good enough to work in the field yet," "I love school now and love what I am learning," "I have come too far to stop now," and "I am optimistic about the job opportunities." Also, listed were: "to finish a goal I started," "the teachers are great," "the feeling of accomplishment," "the diploma is impressive in getting a job," "the program is what I want," "the course is extremely interesting," "the course offers a challenge," and "there is a shortage of experienced personnel in this career in my country."

In general, the reasons given for enrolling and continuing enrollment are as varied as the population vocational education programs serve.

Based upon the findings of objective one, phase III and the analysis of the results of the surveys, the following conclusions were developed:

1. The strongest influence upon a student's decision to enter vocational training is the need for the training offered by the school to get the job they want; therefore, recruitment effort should emphasize the potential end result of successfully completing a program of study.

2. The students' desire to qualify for a specific type of job or their personal goal to provide a better standard of living for themselves for their families are stronger influences upon their initial enrollment than the reputation of the school, reputation of the program, instructor's performance in the classroom, placement record of the program, schedule flexibility, financial aid available or any other major factor considered; therefore, a major emphasis of a recruitment effort should include the personal benefits gained from obtaining vocational training.

3. The students continue their enrollment and strive to complete the program for the same reasons they entered; therefore, retention strategies should emphasize the importance of completing a program to meet the requirements of the job they seek.

SUMMARY

Recruitment

The central purpose of the initial study at its inception was to describe barriers to recruitment and retention of disadvantaged, unemployed, underemployed, and out-of-school youth as perceived by students, teachers, counselors, and administrators. In pursuit of this central purpose it was revealed that several of the recruitment practices used extensively by vocational administrators were not the ones which they rated most successful. For example, "utilization of display booths at state fairs, exhibitions, malls, etc." was ranked as the most utilized recruitment practice conducted by vocational school administrators; however, the success rate of this same strategy ranked fourteenth among all recruitment strategies considered. Two other recruitment practices that ranked high with regard to utilization and low on successfulness were: "development of a slide tape presentation for distribution" and "visits to feeder schools by vocational school staff and students."

Also, the way vocational school administrators perceive the success of particular strategies was different from the way students perceive the same strategy's effectiveness. For example, the recruitment practice which received the overall highest ranking in terms of frequency of use and perceived

success by administrators was, "personal contacts with prospective students made by past and present students." However, students who had completed a semester or more of their training indicated that a friend or former graduate of a program had only minor influence upon their decision to enroll and this factor ranked fifteenth out of twenty factors considered. Also, 57.1 percent of the students indicated that this factor had no influence upon their decision to enroll in postsecondary vocational training. Additionally, administators indicated that encouraging high school students to take courses while completing graduation requirements at their high school was the most successful recruitment practice being used. Students, responding to a somewhat different aspect of early contact, indicated that advanced credit for previous training or experience had relatively little influence upon their decision to enroll. These items ranked tenth and sixteenth out of the twenty items considered. More than 50 percent of the students indicated that being allowed to test out of some areas of course work had no influence upon their decisions to enroll in postsecondary training. It is interesting to note that students who completed one semester or more of a program indicated that the need for training to get the job they wanted and, that they could improve their standard of living if they obtained vocational training, were the most influential factors motivating them to enroll.

After analyzing the results of phases I and III of the study, several points need to be emphasized. First, there is noticeably more agreement between administrators and students as to what influences them to enroll than there is disagreement. Additionally, in the factors where there is disagreement, the disagreement is meaningful. Administrators need to be cautious not to misinterpret or over-emphasize recruitment strategies that have limited utility, namely, "personal contacts made by past and present students." This strategy is important in making initial contacts, but once the contact is made, the real recruitment effort should be to emphasize what vocational training can mean to the potential students' standard of living and that vocational training can help the potential students attain the kind of employment desired. Finally, the students did not indicate that advanced credit for previous training or experience had a major influence upon their enrollment; therefore, administrators should not rely too heavily on this strategy.

Retention

Retaining students in a vocational training program after a successful recruitment effort can be accomplished by skillfully developing a comprehensive plan for retention. As a result of phases I and II of this study, a number of factors have been identified which are important in developing such a plan. For example, every student has individual and unique problems for which there is no common solution; therefore, it is important that a retention plan concentrate on barriers that affect major

groups of students. Barriers such as: "need for financial aid," "need for guidance assistance," "need for transportation," and "need for part-time employment" affect a significant portion of a student population and are barriers over which administrators using a comprehensive plan may exert significant influence.

Secondly, the barriers preventing students from completing vocational training can be divided into three categories; institutional, dispositional, and situational. Of these three categories, institutional barriers are the ones over which vocational administrators have the greatest influence. For example, phase II identified 18 strategies to assist students in overcoming the two institutional barriers; "need more guidance" and "courses are not of suitable quality." Administrators could implement any of these strategies with very little additional cost to the operation of an institution.

A third point that should be considered is that of the top ten barriers identified by the students, only two were classified as institutional. Administrators; however, have identified numerous positive strategies to assist students in overcoming situational and dispositional barriers. For example, "regular class attendance" was identified as a major situational barrier; however, six strategies were identified to help overcome the concerns created by irregular class attendance.

Another factor that needs noting is, that of the ten barriers having the greatest impact on the students' decisions to drop out of school, only one was considered beyond the realm of help where school administrators could impact. That barrier was "health problems" other than those resulting from a handicapping condition.

Finally, when planning retention strategies continued emphasis should be placed on such factors as: the importance of completing the program to qualify for a desired job, the improved standard of living that can be experienced as a result of completing a training program, the relationship between classroom theory to the real job situations, and the placement reputation of program completers. Students who had completed a semester or more of their training indicated that these factors were important to their continued enrollment in vocational training.

Recommendations

Recruitment and retention is a concern with which all vocational school administrators must deal. The results of this extensive study on recruitment and retention reveals to some extent the problems and the solutions. Organizing one's efforts is the key to accomplishing an identified goal; therefore, referral to the manual for student retention and the plan for

student recruitment resulting from this study should prove beneficial to the administrator responsible for this phase of an institution's operation.

The following recommendations are made based upon the findings and conclusions of this study.

1. The results of the study should be made available to area vocational school directors and staff members responsible for student recruitment and retention at the postsecondary level as soon as possible.

2. Further study should be conducted to assess the impact of the implementation of the Florida Postsecondary Vocational Educational Recruitment and Retention plan and to assess administrators attitudes toward the recruitment and retention plan.

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